DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 407 011 JC 970 195

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TITLE	Faculty Evaluation, Portfolio Development, and Accreditation: Walking the Tightrope.
PUB DATE	Feb 97
NOTE	8p.; In: Walking the Tightrope: The Balance between Innovation and Leadership. Proceedings of the Annual International Conference of the Chair Academy (6th, Reno, NV, February 12-15, 1997); see JC 970 185.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Accreditation (Institutions); College Faculty; Community Colleges; Evaluation Criteria; Evaluation Methods; Faculty Development; *Faculty Evaluation; *Portfolio Assessment; Portfolios (Background Materials); Program Development; *Self Evaluation (Individuals); *Teacher Administrator Relationship; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	Flathead Valley Community College MT

ABSTRACT

In response to recommendations from a 1992 accreditation visit, Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC), in Montana, designed and implemented a new faculty evaluation system. The college's Personnel Committee, comprised of seven full-time faculty members and the Academic Dean, was charged with developing the new system, beginning by reviewing evaluation procedures at other colleges, the current literature on faculty evaluation, and the history of faculty evaluation at FVCC. In response to findings that portfolios are very useful for faculty evaluation when there is a concentration on teaching, the Committee developed a portfolio that includes the following components: an evaluation plan, prepared by faculty and submitted immediately prior to their evaluation year; instructional and professional-related evaluations; a self-evaluation; a professional development plan; and a division chair/supervisor's evaluation. A revised pre-tenure evaluation process was also developed requiring more classroom observations. Using a three-year faculty evaluation cycle, one third of the faculty was designated to participate in the pilot year of the new evaluation process. Although there was some initial resistance to change and confusion over the sheer volume of forms, the pilot test indicated that the new system was successful in involving faculty and meeting accreditation standards, while the collaborative development of the process increased trust between faculty and administrators. (TGI)

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ED 407 011

FACULTY EVALUATION, PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT, AND ACCREDITATION:

WALKING THE TIGHTROPE

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Paper Presented at the
Sixth Annual International Conference for
Community & Technical College Chairs, Deans, and Other Organizational Leaders
February 12 - 15, 1997
Reno, Nevada

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JC 970 195

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PRESENTERS

Dr. Walter H. Nolte, Dean of Instruction and Student Services,

Walt Nolte has been Dean of Instruction at Flathead Valley Community College since 1993. He was Dean of Occupational and Continuing Education at Tacoma Community College from 1990-91, Associate Dean of Occupational Education and Chair of the Business Division from 1986-1990, and Vocational Director from 1984 to 1986. Prior to 1984, Dr. Nolte was the Manager of Instructional Services at the Puyallup extension program of Pierce College (Tacoma, WA). He holds an AA degree from Tacoma Community College, a BA and MA in History from the University of Puget Sound (Tacoma WA), and a Ph.D. in Educational Administration from the University of Texas at Austin.

Mr. R. Joseph Legate, Humanities Division Chair and Speech and Drama Instructor

Joe Legate has an MA and BS from Arkansas State University in Speech Communication and Dramatic Arts and a MFA from the University of Southern Mississippi in Lighting Design and Technical Direction. Prior to his position at Flathead Valley Community College, Mr. Legate served as faculty to State University of New York at Oneonta, Clemson University, and Dickinson State University.

Mr. Richard H. Schaus, Mathematics and Natural Sciences Division Chair and Physics and Mathematics Instructor

Dick has a BS from the University of Michigan and a MS from the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School. Dick came to FVCC from the Office of Naval Research, where he was Deputy Director, Research Programs. He was a U.S. Navy Geophysicist with an area of specialization in Polar Oceanography. His recent assignments included planning and policy in the Office of Polar Programs of the National Science Foundation; Director of Polar Programs for the Oceanographer of the Navy; Commander, U.S. Arctic Research Laboratory, Point Barrow, Alaska; Expedition Co-Leader for the 1980 Inspection of Research Stations of Antarctic Treaty Signatories; and Geophysical Advisor to the government of Colombia, with teaching and research duties in the graduate studies program of the Colombian Marine Sciences Institute. Schaus believes that it was due to his work in tropical oceanography while in Colombia that the Navy assigned him forever hence to polar-related duties.

INTRODUCTION: THE NEED FOR A NEW EVALUATION PROCESS

Flathead Valley Community College had a faculty evaluation system prior to 1992. The system was detailed in the faculty collective bargaining agreement. Although this system was adequate, it was inactive. The Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges, during FVCC's ten year accreditation visit in 1992, mandated that the college respond to six general recommendations. One of these was the design and implementation of a new faculty evaluation system. The actual citation from the accreditation visit read: "Efforts must be made to provide improved evaluation for full-time faculty to bring the College into compliance with Standard VII and Policy Statement 26." Northwest's requirements for faculty evaluation read:

> How is the teaching performance of the individual faculty member evaluated? What evidence is there to show that the criteria used are known and accepted by the evaluating officials and the faculty? (NW Accreditation Handbook, 1992)

In addition, under separate policy (Policy Statement # 26), Northwest stated that it is the institution's obligation, in consultation with the faculty, to evaluate on a continuing basis the performance of its faculty members. Faculty members are to be safeguarded in their exercise of academic freedom; however, the protection of academic freedom does not lesson the need for performance evaluation to ensure the effectiveness and quality of those responsible for academic programs. Some type of substantive evaluation of faculty must occur at least every three years. A specific process, timeline, and criteria for evaluation need to be documented. Although collegial participation is critical, it is the obligation of the administration to ensure quality and effectiveness of educational programs through faculty evaluation. At a minimum, administration must have access to the primary sources of raw evaluation data. Multiple indices should be used--each relating to the role of the faculty member. The policy statement provided the following examples: evaluation of teaching through student, peer and administration assessment, evaluation of the scholarly performance of research, evaluation of service. Where deficiencies exist, it is the responsibility of the faculty member for remediation with assistance from the College. In other words, evaluation must be coupled with remedial action and professional development.

This was FVCC's challenge. A new Academic Dean started work at FVCC in September, 1993. No work had been done on faculty evaluation during the previous year. The College had until fall of 1994 to design a system, write a report for the accreditation association, and prepare for a focus visit.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE: MEMBERSHIP AND PURPOSE

The development of the revised procedure started in the fall semester, 1993. The Personnel Committee, comprised of five full-time faculty elected by the members of the faculty union, was charged with the development of a revised faculty evaluation process. The Personnel Committee is a standing committee with a stated purpose to improve instruction. For the purpose of developing a revised evaluation procedure, the Academic Dean and two faculty with prior experience developing faculty evaluation approaches joined the Committee. Prior to 1993, the Personnel Committee administered student evaluations for the College's instructors. Few opportunities existed for acknowledging strengths or addressing weaknesses. Options for evaluation, other than the student evaluation form were not encouraged or explored. Instead of stimulating the instructor's internal motivation, the procedure was too frequently seen as a process to be endured and then probably forgotten. Following the advice from the accreditation report, FVCC began looking in earnest at expanding and improving the faculty evaluation procedure.

HOW WE GOT STARTED

The Faculty Personnel Committee began the development of an evaluation process by reviewing a considerable quantity of material, ranging from our own past experiences, to evaluation methods and instruments used at other institutions, to measurable instructor behavioral characteristics, to teaching philosophy and purpose discussions in the current literature - in order to determine what we wanted to measure, how best it might be measured, and toward what ends the measurements would be used. Our goal was to develop a workable process, using realistic evaluation instruments, which would provide maximum flexibility as well as usefulness for faculty, and which would be coupled to faculty professional development. We ultimately decided to adopt the concept of teaching portfolios as the basis for a faculty evaluation process.

DEVELOPMENT OF FVCC'S FACULTY EVALUATION PROCESS

As indicated, the Personnel Committee reviewed evaluation procedures used at other colleges, reviewed the literature on faculty evaluation, and examined the history of faculty evaluation at FVCC prior to starting the task of designing a new procedure. Committee members were individually assigned tasks in the development process. For example, one member was charged with identifying the characteristics of excellent teaching as a way for determining overall faculty performance based on established criteria. Several Committee members were charged with revising the student evaluation form. One member developed a

philosophy and rationale statement for faculty evaluation. The chair of the Committee and the Academic Dean were responsible for the preparation of the final document.

Throughout the development process, the Committee maintained a policy of open, constructive criticism. Frequently, drafts of the revised process were presented for review to faculty at large, the leadership of the faculty senate and faculty union, and the College administration. The Committee responded when appropriate to suggestions for improving the proposed process.

WHAT DOES THE LITERATURE SAY ABOUT TEACHING PORTFOLIOS?

The literature suggests that institutions should use portfolios for faculty evaluation when there is a concentration on teaching. This is the essence of FVCC and most community colleges. Teaching portfolios shift the burden of work to faculty, yet provide the most flexibility. However, one of the consistent themes in the literature is that administrators must be willing to give up control of the process to faculty. The literature suggests that teaching portfolios decrease the reliance on student evaluations that can be capricious. Teaching portfolios provide for, even encourage, diverse sources of evidence of quality contributions. If properly designed, portfolios will provide the faculty member feedback from a variety of sources and involve an expanded number of peers, students and other College and external people involved in the evaluation of instruction. The literature also suggests that portfolio development is costly in time and resources, however, this is offset by the flexibility of portfolio development and the ability to accommodate changing institutional and faculty needs. The literature also suggests the need to emphasize that the portfolio is for faculty self-improvement and renewal--formative not summative.

CONTENT OF FVCC'S PORTFOLIOS

The Faculty Evaluation Portfolio was designed not only for instructional evaluation by students, peers, and supervisors, and professional-related evaluation by peers and supervisors, but for faculty self-reflection and professional development as well. Indeed, experience has shown that one of the most significant parts of the faculty evaluation process is the self-evaluation required of each faculty member. The required components of each faculty member's portfolio are:

* Evaluation Plan
* Instructional Evaluation
* Professional-Related Evaluation
* Self Evaluation

* Professional Development Plan
* Division Chair/Supervisor's Evaluation

Immediately prior to their evaluation year, faculty members develop their individual evaluation plans and submit them to the Dean via their Division Chair. Within the instructional and professional-related evaluation components, faculty members are given wide latitude in the development of their evaluation plan to choose among a variety of appropriate evaluation instruments to supplement certain mandatory instruments such as student evaluations (instructional) and faculty service evaluations (professionally-related). At the completion of their evaluation year, and upon review of their evaluations prior to submitting their portfolio, faculty develop their individual professional development plans for inclusion in their portfolio, calling upon their Division Chair or the Dean for advice or guidance as desired or required.

PILOT YEAR

It was decided that a three-year faculty evaluation cycle would be appropriate. Accordingly, one third of the faculty was designated to participate in the pilot year of the new evaluation process, which included one member (Dick Schaus) of the Faculty Personnel Committee who participated in the development of the process. We found, not unexpectedly, the normal amount of human inertia and resistance to change, together with some initial confusion caused by the sheer volume of forms - a consequence of providing a complete package of all possible forms from which an instructor could choose. However, we also found that certain new and more meaningful evaluation instruments were enthusiastically received and employed by faculty; that faculty members have been consistently serious, thoughtful, and creative in their self-evaluations and professional development plans; that the feeling of cooperation and trust between faculty and administration has been strengthened; that Division Chairs and the Dean have become more aware of individual faculty member's strengths, philosophies, goals, and in some cases, weaknesses; that the individual faculty members and the institution now have a measurable basis on which to plan individual professional development; and, of course, that the Northwest Accreditation Association's requirements had been fully met. Perhaps one of the larger benefits of the pilot year was the realization on the part of participating faculty that the results of the individual's evaluation portfolio would be used to assist him or her in the attainment of their professional development goals for the overall good of the institution.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PRE- AND POST-TENURE PORTFOLIOS

A revised tenure evaluation process was developed by the Dean of Instruction during the summer of 1995 and approved in September by the faculty

Personnel Committee, the group charged with developing and implementing faculty evaluation. The revised pre-tenure evaluation process is based on the portfolio evaluation process used for the evaluation of post-tenured instructors. The pre-tenure process is more prescriptive than the post-tenure system, requiring for example, more classroom observations. The procedure still provides an opportunity for the pre-tenured faculty member to document quality contributions to the institution, however, the primary purpose is to prepare a portfolio in preparation for applying for tenure. This process is summative in nature, resulting in a decision on future employment status. Although the portfolio is the sum of the evaluation activities for the three year tenure evaluation period, annual reports are submitted to the College's Tenure Review Committee. Faculty members and Division Chairs meet at least yearly to review progress on the preparation of the portfolio. Division Chairs/Supervisors are expected to prepare an annual evaluation to be included in each portfolio.

RESULTS

Faculty have been serious about the process. They have used a wide variety of the suggested options for evaluations and created some of their own. The collaborative development of the process enhanced a sense of trust between faculty and administration. An example of this was a change to the collective bargaining agreement to read that the faculty and administration will have a faculty evaluation process that is jointly developed and mutually agreed upon. The revised process met requirements of the Northwest Association, and the focus visit evaluators praised our efforts. The process also provides the College Dean an opportunity to celebrate excellence, but also to make suggestions.

The results of a survey of faculty who have completed the process will be shared with conference participants.